

January 29, 2009

EXHIBIT 4

DATE 1-30-09

HB 369

Right out of college, I accepted a teaching position at Billings Head Start...and what a personal impact it has made on my life! As I prepared this letter for you, I pulled out my class pictures from the last 7 years and surprisingly enough, I remembered most every child and their story! But one in particular caught my eye...

I want you to picture a little Native American boy with sharp brown eyes, curly brown hair and 4 missing teeth on the top of his mouth. He joined my class in September 2005, sibling of a 12-year-old and a 1-year-old living with his Mom who was making a go of it alone. Mom had her high school education and was working at the Sugar beet factory at the time. Her chosen childcare facility was with an older family friend who took the children for minimal pay—but the provider did not speak English. The reason Mom choose this place? It was what she could afford, and she wanted to work and provide what she could for her family!

So, imagine this little boy, no front teeth, and no modeling at daycare for the English language, who joined our program at the age of 3. I can still hear his cry of frustration and anger because he could not be understood. We had no idea what he was capable academically, and socially because the only way he knew to get his needs met involved grabbing and hitting! I remember sitting in the hallway with him, both of us in tears because he had so much to say, and I wasn't getting it!

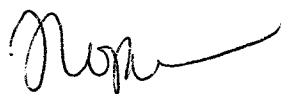
Because he was in Head Start, he ~~immediately~~ was picked up for Speech and Language services immediately! After about 3-4 months of daily intervention, we watched a transformation. This little boy who regularly threw fits and screamed was changing, simply because he was learning the tools he needed to become intelligible. I now remember clearly his smile and his eagerness to show me what he was working on because he knew I was going to understand him! I had this little one for 2 years, and he is one of my most favorite success stories!

There are many more like him....and I pause to wonder—what would have happened to these 120+ children I had in my classroom alone had they of not been through our program!! What would have happened if this little boy had gone to kindergarten with no language, no academic skills, and no appropriate social skills? What would Elementary school look like for he and the others had they not been through our program? Would he have had any success?

Three weeks ago, I with heavy heart resigned my position as Teacher of Head Start to go back to school. I received my W-2's and realized that \$702 every two weeks was not cutting it, which if you do the math, you realize that my yearly taxable income is equal to \$17, 249. I say again: \$17, 249/year as a 4 year degreed teacher! I looked at my debt to income ratio and realized only one of them was increasing!! I realized that in the last 7 years, I have had my student loans in Economic Hardship Deferment because I could not afford the \$89/ month payment, and it was not going to get any better. In the years I was there, I only received 2 COLA raises that total equaled to a 6.2 % raise. I've watched teacher after qualified teacher ^{leave} our program for jobs outside our field because of pay! Our children are losing those who provide consistency and quality!

I urge you to take the time to look within your communities and your own individual programs in those communities and see the faces of children and families who are literally getting a "HEAD START". It's not just a name for these families....it is what becomes a helping hand that encourages them to be self-sufficient and vested in their children's education and success! It is what I thought I would to the rest of my career! Please...invest in our Montana Children—they are yours and my future!

Sincerely,



Hope E. Andren
January 29, 2009

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Billings MT 59105
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1-30-09

My name is Shauna Hooper and live in Missoula, MT. I am a past Head Start parent and a current Head Start family advocate.

As a parent Head Start helped reshape my family and my life. Head Start taught me parenting skills, relationships, skills to benefit my marriage, and the support to go to college.

Head Start gave me support, encouragement and strenght for personal growth that made me a better parent, employee & citizen.

As a current employee of Head Start I see every day families who struggle to just to survive. Children are faced with more barriers and higher needs. Staff are faced with harder situations and ~~we~~ seem to have less support.

Staff often find themselves qualifying for the same services as the families we ~~serve~~, serve. Support HB 369.

Shauna Hooper
406-207-2016

Madame Chair, members of the committee,

My name is Laurie Harden.

I am a Head Start Teacher and from Great Falls.
parent

I am here in support of House Bill 369.

Madame Chair,

I've been with Headstart for 11 years, I
went from parent volunteer to teacher's
assistant to Teacher.

With what I earn I qualify for public housing,
Foodstamps and medicaid. & When I tell people
what I earn they ask why I stay. I'm here
because I love what I do everyday with
my children and families. and I advocate for
the program, my coworkers and my families
because I believe in this program. Please
Support House Bill 369.

Thank you, Madame Chair and members of the committee, for allowing me to testify here today.

During questions and answers, if asked a question:

Go to the podium. Say "Madame Chair, Representative." Wait for the representative to ask the question.

Listen carefully to the question and answer to the best of your ability. If you don't know the answer, say so. "I'm sorry, representative, but I don't know the answer to that question." If you're not asked a follow up question, sit down.

MEA-MFT Head Start Days Schedule

January 30, 2009, Helena, Montana

Noon: Arrive at MEA-MFT Headquarters, 1232 East Sixth Avenue, Helena

(NOTE: parking is tough so allow a little extra time to find a spot--you may need to walk a block or two)

- 12 Lunch with Representative Edie McClafferty, sponsor of HB 369. Relax, visit, get to know each other.
- 1 Discuss HB 369, order of testimony, what to expect at hearing, get prepared to testify.
- 2 Walk across the street to the Capitol. Watch floor sessions, visit with legislators.
- 3 HB 369 hearing, House Education Committee, room 137.

Hearing order:

- Sponsor opening (Edie McClafferty)
- Proponents (Terry Minow, MEA-MFT; Patty Dahl, Helena Head Start Director; Head Start parent, Head Start employees, Washington Corp?)
- Opponents (there may be some)
- Questions from the committee (questions & answers go through the chair, can be directed to the sponsor & anyone who testifies, people who testified are not allowed to speak unless asked a question)
- Sponsor closing

- 5 Hearing concludes.

Madame Chair, members of the committee,

My name is Anna Perry.

I am a Head Start ^{of 4 children that attended HS} ~~past parent~~, currently ^{as a grandparent and staff member of Opp. Inc. Head Start + Great Falls} from 20 years.

I am here in support of House Bill 369.

Madame Chair,

As a grandmother of a child who now is in 1st grade, my granddaughter received quality early childhood education attending 2 years of Head Start. She attended her 1st year @ the Kalispell Head Start and the 2nd year @ Gr. Falls. Jolteigh was behind in her developmental milestones. Head Start helped recognize the problem w/ a ^{delay} ~~screening~~. ^{As a child w/ special need} ~~Did referrals~~ ^{for her needs with} ~~the~~ public school and she was recognized needing special help. She was put on an IEP and speech, physical therapy and occupational therapy was provided by the school district & Head Start. ^{Head Start is} ~~we are~~ lucky to have the collaboration w/ the school district at one of our sites. I want this committee to support to recognize ^{Head Start} ~~the~~ need to be able to help children, recognize & collaborate w/ other agency, so we can continue to help children, ^{at the needs of families} ~~with funding~~ bring at Thank you, Madame Chair and members of the committee, for allowing ^{the two same levels, there could be a chance that we could lose some c} me to testify here today.

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Madam Chair: and members of the committee
My name is Ashley Hooper and I am
a Headstart graduate. I am currently an 8th
grade honor role student at Bonner school,
in Bonner. I think Head start is
great because I learned a lot, and
I still go back and visit my
teachers there. I volunteer in Head
start class rooms, and help with
the kids as a way to give back.

I support Head start, and any bill that
supports Head start so that all
children can have the same
chance that I got.

The class rooms where fun all
the time, and it was a place I
felt safe. Even now and then
out all my classes, when things
get scary or hard I always
want to go back to Head
start.

Thank you,

Ashley Hooper

(406-207-3126)